

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 02148 181830Z

14-11

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

IO-10 /068 W

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R 181730Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7930

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 2148

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GR TU CY

SUBJECT: GREEK PUBLIC REACTION TO AMB MACOMBER'S
TELEVISION INTERVIEW

1. TO VIMA (LIBERAL) ON MARCH 16 AND ITS
AFTERNOON SISTER NEWSPAPER TA NEA ON MARCH 18
(NO NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED MARCH 17 BECAUSE OF HOLIDAY)
CARRIED PROMINENTLY NEWS ACCOUNTS DATELINED NEW YORK,
MARCH 15, FROM SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT, ASSERTING THAT
AMB MACOMBER IN A RECENT TV INTERVIEW IN US HAD
MADE "ANTI-GREEK" STATEMENTS. TO VIMA FRONTPAGED STORY
UNDER HEADLINE "ANTI-GREEK PROPAGANDA OF MACOMBER IN
AMERICA." WHILE TA NEA LESS PROMINENTLY REPORTED "STRONG
ANTI-GREEK PROPAGANDA -- THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN
ANKARA OPENLY FAVORS TURKEY."

2. TO VIMA UNDER SUBHEADING "THE US AMBASSADOR
IN ANKARA TURNS AGAINST GREECE IN ORDER TO SECURE
AID TO TURKEY," INTRODUCED ARTICLE WITH QUOTATION FROM
AMB MACOMBER (OUR TRANSLATION FROM THE GREEK TEXT),
"I DO NOT THINK THAT THE TURKS WERE NOT TO
BLAME FOR THE SITUATION CREATED IN CYPRUS, BUT IT
WAS NOT THE TURKS WHO STARTED IT FIRST. IT WAS
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PAGE 02 ATHENS 02148 181830Z

THE GREEKS WHO DID WHAT NO GREEK OR TURKISH GOVERNMENT

HAS DONE REGARDLESS OF HOW TEMPTED IT MAY HAVE BEEN TO DO SO". TO VIMA CONTINUED WITH THE QUOTE "IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO PLACE ONESELF ON EITHER SIDE ONE HUNDRED PERCENT, BECAUSE OF THE HISTORIC ENMITY FROM WHICH THESE TWO NATIONS ARE MOTIVATED...HOW MANY OF OUR LISTENERS CAN RECALL, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE GREEK ARMY FOUND ITSELF IN THE MIDDLE OF ASIATIC, NOT EUROPEAN, TURKEY AROUND 1920, I REPEAT ASIATIC TURKEY, TRYING TO CONQUER THIS AREA. AND THE SAME WAY ONE HUNDRED YEARS EARLIER (THE TURKS) WERE LOCATED AROUND ATHENS WHEN THE PARTHENON WAS BEING BLOWN UP...FOR ENTIRE CENTURIES THIS BITTERNESS WHICH IS VERY INTENSE CONTINUES..."

3. THE REPORT CONTINUED WITH AMBASSADOR'S DESCRIPTION THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN GREEKS AND TURKS, AND GREEK CYPRIOTS AND TURKISH CYPRIOTS, WERE NOT IMPROVING BUT WORSENING. AND THE CUT OFF OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY BY THE CONGRESS HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THIS. ACCORDING TO TO VIMA'S DETAILED REPORT, MACOMBER ADDED THAT THE CONGRESSIONAL ACTION HAD HUMILIATED TURKEY WHICH NOW BELIEVES US ACTS UNDER THE PRESSURE OF GREEKS. TA NEA QUOTED MACOMBER AS SAYING WE ARE RUNNING THE RISK OF LOSING "ONE OF THE MOST PRECIOUS ALLIED RELATIONS WHICH THE US HAS IN THIS WORLD."

4. COMMENT: TO VIMA AND TA NEA ARE POPULAR NEWSPAPERS WITH WIDE CIRCULATION WHOSE HEADLINES OF "ANTI-GREEK" PROPAGANDA BY AMB MACOMBER CAUGHT READER ATTENTION EVEN THOUGH CONTENTS OF THE ARTICLES DID NOT BEAR OUT THE CHARGE. HOWEVER, GREEK/TURKISH RELATIONS PERSIST AS A MOST SENSITIVE PUBLIC ISSUE HERE AND ANY OUTSIDE COMMENT OR ANALYSIS, NO MATTER HOW NEUTRAL OR OBJECTIVE, IS INEVITABLY INTERPRETED AS HOSTILE TO GREECE UNLESS IT DIRECTLY SUPPORTS THE GREEK VIEWPOINT. WE WOULD EXPECT THAT PRESS ACCOUNTS OF AMBASSADOR MACOMBER'S TV INTERVIEW ARE LIKELY TO FADE QUICKLY WITHOUT FURTHER FANFARE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC ATTITUDES, AMBASSADORS, PRESS CONFERENCES, TELEVISION BROADCASTING
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS02148
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750095-0274
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750342/aaaabllo.tel
Line Count: 99
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <12 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GREEK PUBLIC REACTION TO AMB MACOMBER'S TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU, CY, US, (MACOMBER, WILLIAM B JR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006